



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE JERRY PATTERSON, COMMISSIONER

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PRESS RELEASE

Patterson welcomes VA settlement in Houston

Veterans fight — and win — for right to pray without harassment

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AUSTIN — Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson today welcomed news that Texas veterans and their families will once again be free to worship as they choose at the Houston National Cemetery. According to reports, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has agreed to settle a lawsuit over allegations of religious censorship at Houston National Cemetery.

"This is the right decision," Patterson said. "Once again, it was veterans who stood up to fight for the Constitutional liberties we all enjoy, this time it was in court and not on the battlefield."

During the summer, local veterans groups had accused VA officials of prohibiting religious speech on the cemetery grounds during services. Under the settlement, the VA will take steps to avoid any such prohibition.

Patterson was one of several state and national leaders who voiced their opposition to the Houston National Cemetery's restrictions. Patterson stated his opposition in July in an op-ed that can be found here:

http://www.glo.texas.gov/glo_news/editorials/2011/oath%20op-ed.html . Both Patterson's father and grandfather are buried at the Houston National Cemetery.

As chairman of the Texas Veterans Land Board, Patterson oversees three - and soon, four - Texas State Veterans Cemeteries. Work on the Coastal Bend State Veterans Cemetery north of Corpus Christi is expected to be completed in December.

"Any soldier, sailor, airman or Marine who signs up swears an oath before God," Patterson said. "I am glad to hear that oath would now pass muster at the Houston National Cemetery."

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